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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: TBILISI PROTESTS: SITREP NO. 8

REF: TBILISI 2822

Parliament Votes to End State of Emergency

¶1. (U) Speaker of Parliament Nino Burjanadze announced the Parliament voted by a margin of 153 to 6 on November 15 to lift the state of emergency November 16 at 7:00 p.m., allowing the country to return to "normal life." In a November 15 meeting with EUR DAS Matthew Bryza, Burjanadze said she expects to take over as acting President

after Saakashvili's resignation on
November 24.

Speaker Burjanadze Meets with Opposition

¶2. (U) Burjanadze, Vice-Speaker Machavariani and MP Giga Bokeria met for two hours with opposition leaders from the Conservatives, Republicans, New Rights, and Industrialists on November 16 to negotiate changes to the election code. The New Rightists and Industrialist representatives said an agreement was reached on principal issues, including an agreement to secure Irakli Batiashvili's release, which will happen after the newly-elected president signs the order in January.

¶3. (SBU) Republican Party leader Tina Khidasheli said no agreement was reached on any important matters, showing the fractures in the opposition. Machavariani accused the opposition of issuing ultimatums, and added that some of the parties (read Republicans and Conservatives) are trying to sabotage the negotiations and make "radical demands." Most of the disagreement is over the composition of the Central Election Commission. Conservative leader Kakha Kukava said after the meeting "we are currently deadlocked, but dialogue will continue." The Conservatives then released a press statement accusing the authorities of refusing to cease political repression and to allow Imedi to broadcast immediately. (Note: Our understanding is that the government wants to ensure monitoring is in place before Imedi reopens). United National Council of Opposition (UNC) member Gia Tortladze said the opposition is considering a rally after the state of emergency is lifted. He also said the UNC will organize protests if the government's actions are inadequate and Imedi is not allowed to resume broadcasting.

Parliament Endorses Election Code Change

¶4. (U) Parliament approved the first reading of a draft

package of amendments to the Electoral Code which includes providing free broadcast time to candidates, reducing the maximum number of voters at each polling station from 2000 to 1500, and expanding the rights of foreign observers. Opposition New Rightists and Industrialist MPs took part in the vote, but members of the UNC abstained.

Opposition Leader Khaindrava Questioned

¶5. (U) Goga Khaindrava, a leader in the UNC and former State Minister for Conflict Resolution, was questioned for four hours November 15 by the Interior Ministry's counterintelligence unit in connection with charges opposition leaders cooperated with Russian intelligence in an effort to overthrow the government. Khaindrava's lawyer Eka Beselia was also present. Khaindrava made a statement to journalists objecting to the accusations and saying it was natural he dealt with Russians on a regular basis while serving as State Minister.

Labor Party Leader Resurfaces in Georgia

¶6. (U) Opposition Labor Party leader Shalva Natelashvili made his first public appearance November 15 and met EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus Peter Semneby in Tbilisi.

Parliament Begins Work on Presidential Initiatives

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¶7. (U) Parliamentary committees have begun work on several new presidential initiatives, including amnesty for non-violent criminals in prison and additional funding to the Academy of Sciences.

Court Explains Reasons Behind Suspending Imedi TV's License

¶8. (U) The Tbilisi City Court released a statement November 15 to clarify the reasons for the suspension of Imedi TV's broadcast license. The statement called Imedi TV a "major tool" for organizing the demonstrations that eventually became violent. The Court said the November 7 statement by co-owner Badri Patarkatsishvili "created an immediate and real threat of further escalation of tensions" and was inciting mass unrest.

TEFFT